## Introduction

This is the introduction to the Incident Command System, also known as ICS-100. I've been with the Lubbock Fire Department in Texas for the last 30 years, and for the last 12-15 years of that, I've been involved with incident management. Incident management is where you take a big, bad problem and make it better. ICS-100 will help you to understand and have a basic knowledge of the Incident Command System, and it will prepare you to be ready to respond with some of the other partners that you may respond with, or non-governmental organizations. Our overall course goal for this is to make sure that you know how to apply the Incident Command System, understand the organizational principles and elements, know about the positions, the descriptions of those positions, and the responsibilities that go along with it.

We are also going to go over facilities that are recognized by the Incident Command System and the planning process. It's pretty important that you know what the planning process is all about because without a plan, things can go wrong in a hurry. Sometimes, even with a plan, you've got to have a good plan in place.

What do you expect to gain from the course? There are a lot of answers to that question, and one that I'm always faced with whenever I teach this course live is, "Well, I want a certificate." Exactly, everybody wants a certificate, because this is something that someone has asked you to do, or you are helping to expand your knowledge and one certificate builds upon another.

One thing that people often say they expect to gain from the course is a better understanding of the Incident Command System. They also want to know how they can be better prepared to respond with other agencies and with other jurisdictions whenever they have some kind of a big incident that is beyond their normal scope. As we go through the material, I will be presenting some information, some ideas, that are a little bit different than what you may have thought about before, so just be open to that.

The course is set up in multiple parts. We're in the course overview right now. We're going to cover the Incident Command System, where it started, why it's here, and those kinds of things. Another segment will cover Principles and Features, the founding principles of ICS, and the Incident Command System that make it work. We'll go over the Incident Commander and the Command and General Staff. Those are the players in the process itself. You need to know what they do and what their responsibilities are. Then, we'll learn about the general staff, which is more of the players. Unified Command will cover what happens if you have multiple agencies that are coming together to work to solve a big problem. Last will be a summary, putting it altogether.

This is the ICS-100.B course, which is an introduction to the Incident Command System. You will find that there are ICS-100 courses for public works, healthcare workers, law enforcement, and the fire service. All of these courses have the same curriculum objectives and they have the same benchmarks in place.

I always tell my students that the test of what you learned is not necessarily at the end of the course. The real test that you must pass with 100% accuracy every time is that test that comes whenever something bad happens. We know that it's not a matter of if, but it's a matter of when. We know there will be another tornado. There will be another multi-casualty accident. We know bad things are going to happen. If we can start down the road to learning the Incident Command System now, and learning to apply it in those types of situations, then we're going to be ready to pass the test when the real one comes early some morning.

**What is ICS? A standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management concept**

"What is the Incident Command System?" According to the written definition, it is an on-scene, all-hazards concept for managing an incident. That's the bottom line. It is a management concept for emergencies. It enables a lot of different responders and organizations to come together with lots of different kinds of resources, to come together and all work under common processes so that we can all plan together and get everybody on the same page and allow for an integration of a common organizational structure, so that we all know what everybody else is doing. It is so important that you have everybody on the same page whenever you start trying to fix a problem.

**When is ICS used?**

When is ICS used? It can be used to manage:

- natural hazards– tornadoes, floods, anything that Mother Nature can throw at you
- technological hazards
- human-caused hazards

- planned events

The first three, natural hazards, technological hazards, and human-caused, are the things that are a reality for us today, and those are not going away.

The planned events are when you should start using the Incident Command System. If you use the Incident Command system for planned events, including annual exercises, then you will be more prepared to use it the right way under more pressure when the real incident happens.

The Incident Command System really began back during the mid-1970s in California. We know that California makes the news a lot for the wildfires that they have. Back in the mid-70s, they literally had hundreds of agencies that responded – firefighters, police officers, emergency medical personnel, a lot of different agencies were coming together to manage the wildfires in California. They found that really, they weren't doing a very good job. The Incident Command System has its roots in military operations, but the use of it started becoming commonplace for those California wildfires. They came up with a process and were able to apply it to wildfire season, and then applied that process later on when the rains came and the mudslides began. They realized they could use this same Incident Command System for managing the mudslides whenever that happened.

**What is an incident?**

What is an incident? An incident is an occurrence or event, natural or human-caused, that requires a response to protect life or property. The key point there is that we have life or property involved and we need to do something to help fix the problems that are affecting people.

**Why use ICS?**

One of the reasons for using ICS, and probably the most important one, is that it works and it works well. It's been used since the mid-70s on every kind of incident you can imagine. I know that the Olympics have been managed using the Incident Command System. That's a very large planned event. I know that Super Bowls are reasons for using the Incident Command System. We know that it works both on incidents and planned events. Other reasons for using ICS are the mandates that we have from the National Incident Management System (NIMS). There is also the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), which deals with hazardous materials. OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and the Code of Federal Regulations mention the use of ICS. If you happen to be in a state that doesn't follow OSHA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) covers everybody. They get into the mandates that if you're going to be dealing with hazardous materials, then you should be using an incident management system, and ICS is the best one of those that I know about.

As far as NIMS goes, it actually gives us:

- what we're supposed to do
- who is supposed to do it
- how they are going to do it, and
- why they are going to do it.

**NIMS Components and ICS**

NIMS is made up of five different components:

1. **Preparedness** – That is what we do before we have the "big one." If we use the Incident Command System during our planning and exercising and preparing to get ready for the incident, then that's as good as we can do. There is a lot more to preparedness than just planning and exercising, but that's one of the components.

2. **Communication and Information Management** – That is just making sure that everyone can talk and know how we're going to be communicating during an incident.

3. **Resource Management** – We're going to cover more about resources in a later section. It will cover resource management concerns. For example, making sure  the equipment is compatible with equipment from crews in other towns, who pays for bringing in that extra equipment, and how to make sure it gets returned properly.  That's all contained in Resource Management.

4. **Ongoing Management and Maintenance** – This is an ongoing concern and not a one-time deal. This is something that as technology advances and as we learn more about everything that we do, we're going to make sure that we can communicate better. We're going to make sure that we have better plans, and this is an ongoing system.

5. **Command and Management** – This component of NIMS includes the Incident Command System, multi-agency coordination systems, and public information. The Incident Command System makes up about 85% of the Command and Management portion.S.

**Common causes of incident response problems**

What are common causes of incident response problems?

- **Poor communications** – Have you ever been in any kind of an after-action review where someone *didn't* say there were communication problems? It seems like communications is always an issue. We know that that has always been an issue and we feel like, even as much as we work on it, communications will always be an issue. We've got to continue to get better.

Another one that we continually have problems with is the organizational structure - the management side of an incident.

- **Lack of accountability** – We found that on most incidents, some of the problems are due to accountability. When we're talking about accountability here, we're NOT talking about who gets in trouble if things go wrong. That's not the accountability we're using here. The lack of accountability as mentioned here is talking about:
  o Do we know where everyone is?
  o What they are doing?
  o Do we know that they are actually doing something to help us reach our goals and objectives?
- **Use of unsystematic planning processes and inefficient integration of responders** – Communication is part of a systematic planning process. Do we have multiple planning processes going on, which is a bad thing?  There needs to be one consolidated planning process with common communications.  Are they integrated, do they have interoperability, and are they able to work together?

**ICS benefits**

- **Safety** - One of the benefits of the Incident Command System is that it helps ensure the safety of the responders and the workers. The accountability is probably the most important piece of it. If you know where everyone is, and you know what everyone is doing, and everyone is doing whatever job they are doing to help reach those final goals, then we can identify those safety hazards and mitigate those before we have a problem. Safety is one of the main benefits of ICS. Safety should always be right up on top of the list.
- **Achievement of response objectives** – The achievement of response objectives is another one of the benefits of the Incident Command System – making sure that everyone is on the same page and everybody is trying to reach the same objectives. If you take a simple car wreck with injuries where you have a fire department, a police department, and an EMS service there, all three are going to one of the simplest accidents that happens every day. But what are their response objectives? The firefighter is there to make sure that we don't have any fuels leaked, and to make sure we don't have a fire going on. The police officer is there to help protect the public, and to keep the traffic flowing so we don't have other accidents. EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is there to get that patient out and get them to the hospital. It's the simplest type of incident that happens everywhere every day, but they all have different objectives. So, we have to come together so that we can have a coordinated effort – the three different

agencies coming together with a coordinated effort to reach our overall objectives. That's what the Incident Command System does in a nutshell.

- **Efficient use of resources** - The Incident Command System also helps to use our resources adequately. They (you know "they" -- those smart people who know everything), they say that usually, the case is that you have enough resources, but that the resources that you do have haven't been managed properly. One of the things that the Incident Command System does, one of the benefits, is to help us to utilize our resources in a more effective manner.

In summary, the Incident Command System is a standardized management tool for meeting the demands of both large and small emergency and non-emergency situations. It represents best practices and has become the standard for emergency management across the whole country. It may be used for planned events, natural disasters, and acts of terrorism. This is a key feature of NIMS. All of that wrapped up together is ICS.